POETRY QUARTERLY

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EDITORIAL

This editorial will be entirely about practical matters concerning the publishers of POETRY QUARTERLY. For the benefit of subscribers, contributors and our many other correspondents we have plèasure in announcing that we have moved to new offices at 7, Crown Passage, Pall Mall. Letters sent to the old address, however, will still reach us. We shall be sharing these new premises with Falcon Press, a new company of general publishers formed by Captain Peter Baker, whose series of broadsheets, editions of poems, and anthologies under the name of Resurgam Books appeared during the most difficult years of the war, an encouragement to those who wanted to keep alive the spirit and tradition of English literature. For some time the two Presses have been sharing the same distribution service, and henceforth under the same roof will be still more closely linked together, Captain Baker joining the board of Grey Walls Press as a director. Mr. Séan Jennett is also becoming a director of both companies, and will be responsible for production matters.

POETRY QUARTERLY will continue under the sole editorship of its present editor, but with the first number of Volume 8, Spring 1946, the cover will be newly designed, though the format will remain unchanged. We believe that the small size is convenient to most of our readers, and that they prefer the poetry inside to a large art cover, however nice this may look in the shops. Owing to the increase in paper allowed for magazines, we are able to print a much larger quantity, and also to increase the number of pages. This will allow us to use more articles in subsequent issues, but unfortunately, alas, we shall no longer be able to soften the pill of rejection by the convenient excuse of lack of space.

We wish all our readers the best of luck in the New Year, and those of them who are poets good reviews and no rejection slips.

HENRY TREECE

The Sons of Peace

Because we may have lain too long with death,
Or held his shrivelled hand in gibbering fear
When life became too hard for us to bear,
We are no less for that;
Our hearts beat no less bravely for the thought
That last night when the world was set aflame
We saw how fragile youth was,
Saw how weak the faithful flesh could be
Against the engines of destruction:
No, no less swiftly at the dawn of day
And sun's bright eye chasing the mists away.

To have listened to the nightingale's
Deep mellow throbbing through the wood,
Opalescent arabesques flung to the moon's dead world,
Or to have watched the frenzy of the dancing stoat,
Weaving his magic patterns round his prey,
Is to have known two shapes of beauty in the heart,
Two ways of life
As difficult to reconcile as war and peace;
But yet two ways, each valid in its place.

We who were taught the tale of Mother Goose,
And knew the midnight dagger in the straw,
Whose ears were friendly to the bat's shrill cry,
Having fast in our heart that madly glorious play
Of tigers prowling in the Prince's halls
Screaming for love;
We know the smell of sunset on dead hills,
The hells of sympathy,
The language of the maggot in the skull;
Our hands can fashion flowers at one swift minute's
grace.
We can be saint or troglodyte, the sons of peace.

IAIN FLETCHER

Hymn

Listen, she said, and listen, my heart
Is a strange clock talking, is a bell
Searching out speeches in a distant tongue.
Because I lived a little way apart
Even the dead could never love me well,
Therefore my heart is like a harp unstrung,

Nervously moved by some mad scholiast.
Even the dead are warm and relative
Under the crabbed cupola of the snow;
Many's the mild doe shall escape at last,
And many are the cunning shall not live.
Now, hear my heart and let its music show.

Sonnet

Pure image and soft absent presence, known,
By presence lost, but absent still declined
In peace of leaves, in stillness of the stone;
By light dissolved, but in the shade defined.
All shape is past, all past is past belief;
Be with me then, give me not daily bread
But that eternal food born out of grief
Nourishes the living and redeems the dead.

At minutes only, when worlds fall away
Leaving two hands like constellations
Upholding voids in their naked course,

The soul sighs towards her certain source
As if dependence on the Truth and Way
Were rising from her very respirations.

RONALD BOTTRALL

Peace

When may we expect peace? Not that false peace
That masquerades between the troughs of seas,
Deceives in the silence between earthquakes, or the lull
Between atomic bombs. Peace is the pull
Towards the motion of tree, star and stone,
The contented rhythm of the child at the nipple,
The moment of surrender after union.
Peace is the stirlessness of a nesting bird,
A tiptoeing on mountains with the sun,
A flowering forward to the end of will
And the joyful whispering of the timeless word
That passeth understanding, bringing time's harvest home.
Peace will come when there is no more murder in the womb.

NICHOLAS MOORE

Constance Applezombie Au Clair De La Lune

O Father, Father Christmas, hear my prayer,
With your great big eyes and your beard so clear,
As by my window I stand and watch the moon,
Shuddering like a poplar over the dark lagoon;
Forgive me if my speech seems to you queer.

O Father, Father, I distracted am
By the moon that beameth so brazen-goldenly.
I would be affected by love, but I stamm-
-er in my speech, being taken unexpectedly
By emotions that are wholly new to me.

Look at yon moon. O Father, see his face;
See how he leers, how huge the mouth, how huge!
He reminds me of my own sexual disgrace,
When I was suddenly taken in the nude
By the exploring eyes of a distant cousin.

Nothing came of it, for there was a reason,
But afterwards his cold eyes searched me through,
Just as the moon's now looking. Father, you
Must help me. I can scarcely bear to speak.
How poor I am! How dreadful, sinful, weak!

I had imagined that Endymion came
And lickéd me with silver tongues of flame,
Until my breasts shone brilliant as twin stars,
And all my body flamed in triumph. Cars
Drew up in the drive then and I heard my name

Called petulantly, and it was papa
Returned home with his friends. 'My God, Girl, we
Could see you in the window, nude as a bitch.'
Ah! Father Christmas, would I were a witch
To change men's evil tongues; to shoot my star

Across the heavens and appal the moon
With my bewitching flesh by the lagoon.
O Father, Father Christmas, bring me soon,
  The golden apple, the silver spoon.

I have advised the skies of what I am.
I have distrusted man and all his works.
Frankly, dear Father, how the body jerks
Amazes me. I would not give a damn
For it. And yet there's terror here that lurks

In mirrors, and the splendour of the moon
This night strikes me with cold. I would be she
Whose arms encircle earth. Father, hear me,
Bring me all that I wish. Let it come soon!
O silver apple, O golden, O golden spoon!

THOMAS GOOD

Reverie

Woods of mercy, now in your curious hour
Of glowing, I return,
Jealous of harpies, saddened learn
The cities' towers are fallen, all the world is bent,
Demand before your lake, our mirror,
What oracle of innocence or black-letter saint
Approved delay, sharp torture of restraint?

Girl embraced in former shadows
Fateful in bloom, haloed in nicotine,
Her youth perplexed, in mind and word,
Resists the cicatrice, adores the scene.

Of fragile beauty balanced on a frieze of fears
Nor spring nor learning can resolve the elements,
But only music, humming on earth's wings
Deride the other's unavailing tears.

The gracious trees in hisses bend apart
Reveal our lake, engrave
A distance, separation on the heart,
And trespassing, thieves of the failing light,
Two cuckoos wake the horizontal night.

To rest unshivering here
Where ghastly pines keep watch
And tranquil rain makes clear
Our folly, hides the stars,
Was never perpetually ours.

The fruit scorched leaves now no ashes
Bitter in labour magnifies the hour,
The song of birds in sleep persists,
Your minim word my wand,
Mine gathering no flower.

BRENDA CHAMBERLAIN

VI. Reproof from Schlotheim

From *The Green Heart*

Accent gesture budding bone and hand
Speak of tragic fables you have harvested:
Grapes pressed with a brown foot
From old vines your fathers tended.

Why, when the time is ripe, must your wine be so
Clouded and bitter? Steel wires pull at the hair
And thin arms of the dancing girls
Who weep in a legend of looking-glass,

Venus' glass. No round thighs wake the morning
Surface of tarns in your song. The story is carried
Forward on wings of grief that you seize,
Patiently cling to, lost in the cry

Of wild birds; but you yourself, my soul beloved,
Life made to shine as an oval pool in the rocks
That we who drink at your deep well
May see reflected the star-clear depths.

Look upward now to the high untrodden hill
Whose shoulder comfortless receives the snow.
Alone she faces darkness out;
In her wide breast she holds rebirth.

You say that death's torrential tears destroy
Leopard and tiger, even the mountain of stone;
That man obeying a dark constraint
Sickens at youth's and love's passing.

We who stand up from earth with germinal growth
Are fixed to life and look towards the sun.
Grown old, man finds it good to rest,
To sleep outstretched in the white rain.

EITHNE WILKINS

The Gun-Mouth

1. *The Man Out of Sight*

Here are my shuttered hands, now dark and closed,
in front of the hidden face;
and the hair falling, quietly by night,
as the elm and the bitter holly overshadow long grass.

It may be astonishment of sudden rain
struggling among the leaves, that changes the air
at one time and another; or light thrown from a passing mirror
into which the whole place might disappear,
mist, and the haunted house.

Or it may be deep in the forest that the story told of,
in the clearing where the pebbles gleam
as shreds of a torn-up letter,
grief without an owner; and the winding-sheet, now loosened as it were a leaf,
pales into shadow, moss, and toadstools' glitter.

This is the unanswerable view
no hands are wide enough to stop my seeing: the wide, pale thought,
which cannot die,
out of this nightfall and behind shut eyes,
trained on me like a gun;

and from there, ranging slowly as peat-fire underground,
the echoed voice has set alight
these darkened, upright fingers of my rigid hand.

2. *An Unarmed Man*

What smiling I am threatened with,
what darkness and stopped breath
when this song starts.
What shadowy reports

from a duel on the housetops
and, like crumbling bread, collapse
of long streets in the heart.
So now let this song start.

Gently as if he were not blind
the dancer jigs on open ground,
making the hard way home.
No trumpet and no drum

mark the dangerous corner and the hill,
the waiting echo and stiff blood, this smile.
Quiet as smoke the song
curls up, a broken ring.

DAVID WRIGHT

The Shell

We hear the spiral poem of a shell
Evolve a latticed sea in stone alcoves,
In a cut pearl, scoop bays
Where the aquatile echoes climb and fall,
And salt plantations fling
Streamers across the pulse of rise and fall,
The spawny, mackerel-colour, stripling seas
Globe in an ear.
Gull-wreathed and famous bow the rainy heads
Æolian, in that small space of shell;
Easily, at beginning of our day,
We slipped the moorings of that sheltered bay,
Which is perhaps our visionary home.
Under those waters tilt the sunken hulks
Apparent now in the shadowy roar
A shell skeins from the quiet of a room;
Globed in an ear
The dark hone of the sea, and noise of hosts,
Which, audible or silent, sap, and break,
The obsolete frontier of the hanging coasts.

GEORGE SHIERS

Invocation to a Marble

Here stands a woman's eye concealed
In terror, revealing curves stipple
The supple form, curious falls
The body mirrored-in-time, congealed.

Withstanding now the understanding
Hand, friendly eyes feel, fingers creep
Marble, marvel not dim mysteries
But keep the figure-thought crawling

Endlessly. The dream lies dead.
Now the vigorous elastic limbs
Tighten, turning to laughter
Water, pigments tongue the living mood.

I have forgotten the dying swan,
The invitation to sleep—keeping
Fire, the fine tension to duty moving
From delicate love or the slender sun

In the history between this eye, this nature
Rigid in flint, the clean blade hints
Where wire flames, stone rolls chipped from time:
O Lady! hold solid my fragile future.

The Paling Rainbow

Muttering drums have gone, melting swords
Breed iron carcasses to bind
Our brittle loves; a shattered certitude
Is ours, broken bones of brilliant words.

Remembering the words we journey on,
Learning metempiric myths from old men
Leaning forward lost in small wonder
On silent mud, eager to the certain

Future, our certain history. Then dead
Fables held us from endeavour, thin
Netted flimsies and decaying tales
Dragged our hands the way our footsteps led.

Now leading feet are hands, are eyes, and brain
Involutes the golden mirror-tongue;
The paling rainbow fades, dissolves, solving
The burning meaning—but the dreams remain.

The dream is not renewed, we dream, we pause;
White hope and anger linger, the deed's glory
Is time-sustaining: can we as yet cast fear
See tears and brilliant words a foam of stars?

W. S. GRAHAM

Since All My Steps Taken

Since all my steps taken
Are audience of my last
With hobnail on Ben Narnain
Or mind on the word's crest
I'll walk the kyleside shingle
With scarcely a hark back
To the step dying from my heel
Or the creak of the rucksac.
All journey, since the first
Step from my father and mother
Towards the word's crest
Or walking towards that other,
The new step arrives out
Of all my steps taken
And out of to-day's light.
Day long I've listened for,
Like the cry of a rare bird
Blown into life in the ear,
The speech to that dead horde
Since all my steps taken
Are audience of my last
With hobnail on Ben Narnain
Or mind on the word's crest.

DEREK STANFORD

Private Autumn

To J. L.

'. . . *fuego rubio cortado.*'—Rafael Alberti

Drinking the orange sun in cloudy cider
while the pub fire frets like a firework in the hearth
I wonder what you with your head of a coiffed chrysanth
would make of October in the Public Gardens.

Autumn's fan-painting of the afternoon
hung a freize of flowers from the lawn's blue misty edge.
Still on their mast-firm stalks the sun-spot blossoms
were warm as pineapples in a drunk man's dream—
ramparts of ripeness, and tawny-weeping trees
were beautiful titians with ruined cliffs of hair.

Behind the aviary wire strut tropical birds
whose match-fire crests spurt into golden flame,
whose tongues screech out with the tearing sound of tin,
while the drinking-fountain piddles on its stone.

Deciduous evening: coldness and shadows come;
the leaves that lie on the lake are the tarnished scraps
of chocolate-paper scattered in picnic summer.
Iron spikes of railings chill with the coming of snow.

A light goes on in a window across the way,
and like an inverted lily the house floats up
with its head and its hands entangled in cables of weed.

They have rung the closing-bell, and the day closes.
The falling coals suggest the fall of fruit
in quiet gardens; apples among the grass,
pitted with grottoes of tipsy stumbling wasps.

How rich the earth is, and how poor am I,
hearing the echoes of your absent voice,
racy as cooking-sherry; who once lay,
polished, compact, and altogether new
as a red horse-chestnut in the hand of a child,
exposed in Time's own palm while I passed on.

(Nottingham, October, 1945)

MAURICE LINDSAY

Nightfall, at the Mouth of the Ardyne

A rough burn rumbles over pebble stones
interminably, as the hot sky cools
to its ashen mould again, and clustered drones
of birdsong pierce the scented air's warm pools
hanging about this meadow where we lie.
You move your body; the rustle of your dress
and the shifting leaves start up my wild heart's cry
that folds its frightened wings in your caress.
Listen, my darling! Here, the rattling water
runs to unloose its tumbling to the sea;
here, we are one with the dry grasses' chatter,
here, we are touched by the lips of infinity!

But sharp, black needles of reflected leaves
stitch night across the calm shores of the Clyde.
A silhouetted troopship gently weaves
a net of lights cast from her starboard side.
There's music from her decks, raw scraps of singing,
crude antidotes to soothe the stretching wounds
of those from whom the rack of grief is wringing
proof that Time's words will rarely fit Love's tunes.
So, desperately, I turn to you and swear
by tall Saint Andrew and his silver star—
knowing that long-robed saints are country fears
and constancy is only what we are!

PATRICIA LEDWARD

Soldiers and Civilians

Anonymous we leave our barrack rooms
And muddy camp where the rains drum
On an iron roof, we converge
To the feverish cities, emerge
In the land of our childhood.

But familiar corners, books and faces leer:
'Stranger, you are not wanted here!'
Experience has dulled our contact
And people are no longer sure as fact,
But nebulous.

Pain has a mobile face, we know too well
His change of mood; we have rung the knell
For a friend, the pain was clean and abrupt.
We have known love grow bitter and corrupt,
We have lost a faith and been perplexed:

We have lost ourselves and suffered fear
And the fog of boredom is always near,
With small frustrations our flesh is nipped,
We are the slaves and time holds the whip,
But this is nothing . . .

Listen, while I try to tell the grief
Of women when their sons lie in the grave:
Obedient to some law the mother dries,
Grows ashen, like a tree that dies,
Rotting and sick.

O monstrous is their sorrow! Tearless the mother
Walks among the weeds that cover
Ruined houses, drifts before the wind
With the autumn leaf, her mind
Unhinged and wandering.

Unshaven, standing by the river dreaming of a good life,
Under a melancholy sun, letting the leaves
Fall down upon their shoulders, or close to the wall,
Pacing the street, lonely and wild,
Like the hungry,

Are the men, who, maddened by the rhythm of the march,
Fled the parade ground, their minds besmirched
By Army mud and swearing lips,
Whose life was nervous in their finger tips,
Who could not kill:

Nor had the strength of Kirkegaard to bear
A cross; aghast they stare
Into abysses; they have no land
And beg for succour with distorted hands,
Too proud to speak.

In attics close to the wind and high
Above the city are those who mirror eternity,
They live beyond the laws of ordinary people,
They cannot traffic with the rabble,
Their atmosphere is rare.

Seeking for symbols to clarify their cosmic
Apprehension their brain cannot contain the geometric
Shapes: madness writes his thesis
On their brow, they split in pieces
Numerous as stars.

Others live like fiends,
Their energy ignores control, they find
Love on the pavement, fill their beds with sherry,
Dance naked in the streets and the city is merry
All night with their songs.

The sweet and foolish, untouched by sorrow
Smile in their gardens, ignorant that some tomorrow
Their world may crumble; existence is a dream,
Myopic, the world to them is what it seems
And vanity forbids the use of glasses.

In crypts and tubes we can inspect
Those whom the doom of cities wrecked,
Their sleep is broken by memories,
They scream and mutter, covering their eyes
With rheumy fists.

And we, clumsy but somehow formal in our khaki,
Observe these civilians with quiet curiosity;
They are like coloured bits of glass among sand.
We speak the same language, but the sounds
Evoke different images.

Their ways are not ours, we are alien
And we wonder what bridge will span
The gap when peace comes, and what reception they
will give us?
These thoughts are always with us,
Troubling us, like the poor.

BORIS PASTERNAK

Poem

On the dreamy breast the boat is swaying:
The willows hang over us gently wrapping
With kisses necks, rowlocks and shoulders.
Wait! to any one this might happen.

You see in a poem these things are gay,
But they mean a lilac turned to ashes,
Dewy sweetness of daisies crumbled away,
Lips meeting lips out there in the starlight.

They mean embracing the horizon out yonder,
Arms round enormous Herakles knitting,
They mean whole centuries you must squander
Listening to magic of nightingales' trilling.

(Translated by V. DE S. PINTO,

HAROLD MORLAND

The Cranes of Ibycus

The sun bled quietly away, and the wind
Mourned
And then on the comfort of sorrow slept.
Silence padfoot out of the desert crept
To sigh at the fire;
And somewhere the drums of a village
Like soft drops of blood from a wound gone numb,
And we lay bandaged in dreams,
Shaping durable life from the sand in sleep
Or watched the sky with its soft alien stars.

Till a whistle of wings,
A proud inhuman cry
As of dark angels of fear lamenting a death—
Beauty and pride fallen—
And all night over the river I hear them calling.

Grey
they stand on a dark shoal
Sifting the rumour of water;
The morning breeze, too light to lift them,
Ruffles their crest
And restless awaiting the first fires of the sun
They turn and call
And a wind answers, stiff and insistent out of the dawn,
And rank by rank they rise with a rush of wings
Swelling to thunder, the rapids of flight
Swirling with cries.

O Ibycus lying now in the cold fens
In the Russian waste on the bristling banks
Of the harsh rivers of Europe—
The world in its theatre stares entranced at the play,
And the plangent cranes the grey
Angels of fear seeking the south
Lament a hidden death.

Theme from Hakluyt

The Boy from Guiana

I

This is a strange people. From their mouths
A blossom of words and the scent of song
Their lips tart with the tang of fruit,
And their minds the soft decay of brown leaves,
The lye of burnt desires.
I have seen their eyes
The placid surface of pools
Where I have leaned, to see myself stare only
Reversed in image,
That a light wind has distorted.

I shall not know them.
Even the women
That have lain back with a parted smile
Have been so many whispering forests.

When first I landed, the ship darkning slowly
Towards the horizon that smouldered it down and consumed it,
I looked from the fringe of trees on the shore
At the curved belly of ocean, alive
With sudden fish, the splinters of rainbows
Broken in storm, fragments of light
And the cooled drops of blood of the heroic sun . . .
If this is the sea, I said,
If this is the sea
What should the land be like? what wing'd delight
Should nest in the trees, what jewel'd songs
Sing from the golden throat of the afternoon?
What beasts in the secret forest flare
With a moment's sharp illumination?
What should the people be but an easy brown path
To the sleep of desire and to dreaming?
Forgetting the white steel of men forged in cities,
The hearts paved with knowledge
And veins chuckling with soiled blood
Like gutters after a rain.

II

They neither welcomed nor despised me;
No drums beat the wonder of my coming
To a doubting tribe, puzzled at the code-word
Strange and exciting.
Or if they beat
The wind tattered the message
And dropped it into an empty pouch of the forest.
Nor did they pinch my white flesh in their fingers
And feed me on drowsy food.
It seemed that neither at altar nor throne nor table
Had I a peculiar worth.

But was there an altar?
I have seen no procession,
Heard no cry making the night shudder;
Have seen no dancer
Deliberate, lithe, in a hideous mask
Menace the shrinking widening circle;
I have not been crowned as a god born of the sea.

Nor a throne;
True there was one who had more than the rest of wives,
But he sat squat on the earth
Or lolled in a hammock;
I have not been given the rigid power of a sceptre.

And as for food, I dipped my hand in the messes
Made for us all.

III

I remember a tale
Of wise old men with gold and frankincense
And myrrh,
That came in the cold of the year to a country child,
Who hushed his crying at their glittering toys
And played with these, his toes, his mother's thumb
And found them equal in delight.

Which of them was wise?

Maybe moving home they thought the journey long,
Asking, Was it worth
To come so far, wit-led by an errant star
To see another birth?
. . . A nine months' voyage shuttered in the hold
To the huckstering quays of the world
The child had suffered. . . .

Which of them was fooled?

Was it worth this long journey to a bright land
To discover I was a child?

Priest or king I had thought to be
But this is a strange people
With neither rule nor reverence, only birth
And mating and death.

I have looked in their eyes
To see myself stare only
Reversed in image, reversed in human time
Towards a second birth.

This is the moment of birth,
The nine months' journey is over.
The gold is somewhere about me, the frankincense
Is all gone up in smoke,
The priest-grey ash of the fire
Is breathing a prayer
Ascending, wavering in the air
To be dissolved
And journeying where?

The myrrh is sharp on my lips.

IV

The tricks of speech elude me.
I have been silent so many years that the surface
Where the bright words blossom
And the green sharp reeds of thought
Declare the shallow heart of the pool,
Matted, tormented,
Made into nests for the birds of the air
Or hiding-holes for the fishes.

The tricks of speech elude me. . . .

My body is burned brown and burnished like copper,
My head is full of the silver of dreams
I have thoughts like an ore of gold,
And if I go
I shall bear the brand of a ruler,
I shall hear the cries of heads on the coins
They mint of my body;
Mined and smelted and cleansed
Of the veins that enrich me, I shall be white flesh
And the hollow galleries of bone.

Sometimes I have thought that a weary land
Is glad of the bleeding quarries
Glad at exhaustion, glad of contempt
Abandoned.
Then shall the rosebay bloom and the creatures return
To fashion a home there,
The silver chain of a bird-song
Lonely
Draw the evening loaded with silence. . . .

I will go to the ship.

WREY GARDINER

In the Evening

In the evening the strings whisper and sing.
There is a difference between the voice of the heart
And the gramophone record, the whistling of the bird
And the lament of the neurotic. The cross
And the coffin are the curious theme
Of the prelude of old age, the dim
Note of exacerbated pride, the throng
Of tame wood lice which inhabit the dead
And empty skull of Plato in the mind
Of the tired poet. Do not add anything but truth
To the lazy dream of falsifying annotators.
Let us speak for ourselves from our own minds
Even Mozart wrote too much
Good night, beloved, good night
The tapering symphony softly winds
To a serpentine conclusion, the snake moves
To its rhythmic end, tallies
With the empty room, the door
Into the eternal majesty of a song
I write because I love
I love because I am
The wide calm waters of my end.

JEAN COCTEAU

Beauty Secrets

A poem is a series of accidents for sabotaging our sense of comfort.

Every poet is a resister. Every poet takes part in an underground movement.

The trouble with politics is that they are always miles in the rear of poetic revolutions. From this it follows that those poets who get mixed up in them wander astray in regions more moribund than those which they by nature inhabit.

Revolution always has an air of poetry about it for the reason that poetry is revolution.

A poet is the guardian of a tradition of anarchy.

The poet's chaos becomes an order which the conventional order rejects. The poet at his trial always makes the wrong answer. If his answers were agreeable to the Church he would be betraying God.

The great solitude of a poem is the consummation of anarchy and aristocracy. The great solitude of the poet exists in his being completely invisible and visible to the point of ridicule.

A crushing minority: the poet's ballot.

A poem is opposed at all points to that which man has come to consider as the best way of expressing what he thinks. One must therefore be humble to read a poem and not combat it as an enemy.

Nobody is as humble as the poet for he is nothing but a vehicle. That which gives him an air of pride in his care for the force within him just like Joan of Arc's care for God's cause in her.

It so happens that our friends who do not share our sense of rhythm interpret as deficiencies that which this rhythm dictates to us. Imagine me saying to Picasso, 'You're quite wrong, you know. Your head of a woman has a third eye to it.'

Style is not a dance but a way of walking.

The absence of rules in poetry obliges the poet to search for means which lend to his work the prestige of a secret rite.

One too often gives the name of poem to a kind of rhythmic prose, dressed up in the form of a poem. These artificial poems invariably seduce the public. A true poem is composed of subtle balances and breaks in the balance, of a movement so light and yet so tense that inattentive and disjointed minds fail to distinguish between them.

Poetry and the thunder-bolt behave alike. The thunder-bolt strips the shepherd of his coat and carries it off for a mile or so. On the shoulder of the labourer it leaves the photo of a young girl impressed. It overturns a wall and leaves a tulle curtain intact. In brief, it creates the unusual. No more than the thunder-bolt does poetry calculate its blows.

Poetry borrows a host of contrasts at random, puts one off on the wrong sense, and accidently inaugurates a new order.

Poetry terminates at the idea. All ideas slay poetry, for poetry is an idea in itself and cannot express any other without ceasing to be poetic; without destroying itself, that is.

Poetry: the blood of silence.

The contemporaries of Baudelaire saw and admired only his grimaces. Behind these distortions his real appearance has come to us slowly like the light from the stars.

There is nothing to discover in the poet de Musset. As he was so he remains. He deceives nobody. He reassures. That is why Paris has so many statues to him.

Apollinaire sang his poems as he wrote them and they remain enchanting to us. The secrets of a lovely woman are of more worth than Aristotle.

The clear water of Eluard reflects and distorts his nature lovingly. Those who imitate him copy only a reflection.

It is neither Rimbaud's 'ramparts of wall-flowers' nor Baudelaire's 'wine-jugs behind the bushes' that make up the glory of these poets. Their glory comes from the apparent exoticism of 'The drunken boat' and the erotic exoticism of Baudelaire under which something more is hidden.

It is by the ornamentation which becomes detached from his work that the poet lays hold of the public and moves towards those who will truly discover him.

Poems, as Apollinaire said to me, are 'events'. Every poem should be an event. Now in between two such events it happens that one may exploit one's muse. These intermediary poems are the ones that attract the public attention.

The word poetry is often abused in employing it to describe all that appears to be poetic. Poetry does not know how to be poetic. That which is poetic shines with a light which is shed from poetry.

It is the poetic element in a poet which impresses his contemporaries. Poetry hides behind this mask, and naturally enough the knowing people ignore the real poet of their age since what they desire is the dead matter which shall one day disappear to make way for poetry.

The world is no more than the reverse of some material whose right side is poetry.

The poet is a liar speaking the truth.

A master-piece is a game of chess in which death finds itself in check.

The shapeless is insufferable to the poet.

The poem is a written cry.

To read poetry one must be inspired.

(Translated by DEREK STANFORD
with acknowledgments to FONTAINE)

REVIEWS

HERBERT READ, *A Coat of Many Colours: Occasional Essays* (Routledge, 8s. 6d.).

The essays and reviews in this moderate-sized volume cover such subjects as Anarchism, War Books, Toulouse-Lautrec, Paul Klee, Eric Gill, Havelock Ellis, prose style, Lawrence of Arabia, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Socialist Realism, George Saintsbury, Verlaine, Stendhal, Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Marlowe's *Faustus*, Chinese painting, Salvador Dali, Kierkegaard and Henry James. Those I have named make up roughly a quarter of the subjects that Herbert Read discusses, and obviously such a book cannot be exhaustively dealt with in a thousand or fifteen hundred words. I prefer to concentrate mainly on one point—the clash between Read's political beliefs and his æsthetic theory. But the multiplicity of subjects is in itself a point to be noticed. Even if one regards Read simply as a critic of painting the range of his interests and sympathies is very wide, and his open-mindedness has been his strength and weakness as a writer.

Read is an Anarchist, and an Anarchist of an uncompromising kind; he admits that the ideal society cannot be realized at this moment, but he refuses to be satisfied with anything less or to abandon the belief that Man is perfectible. He is also an accepter of the Machine Age and a defender, on æsthetic grounds, of the products of the machine. In some of the essays in this book, notably 'Art and Autarky' and the essay on Eric Gill, he seems to hedge a little, but in general he sticks to it that an anarchistic form of society is compatible with a high level of technical development:

> 'Anarchism implies a universal decentralization of authority, and a universal simplification of life. Inhuman entities like the modern city will disappear. But anarchism does not necessarily imply a reversion to handicraft and outdoor sanitation. There is no contradiction between anarchism and electric power, anarchism and air transport, anarchism and division of labour, anarchism and industrial efficiency. Since the functional groups will all be working for their mutual benefit, and not for other people's profit or for mutual destruction, the measure of efficiency will be the appetite for fullness of living.'

The vague generalization contained in the last sentence avoids the enormous question: how are freedom and organization to be reconciled? If one considers the probabilities one is driven to the

conclusion that Anarchism implies a low standard of living. It need not imply a hungry or uncomfortable world, but it rules out the kind of air-conditioned, chromium-plated, gadget-ridden existence which is now considered desirable and enlightened. The processes involved in making, say, an aeroplane are so complex as to be only possible in a planned, centralized society, with all the repressive apparatus that that implies. Unless there is some unpredictable change in human nature, liberty and efficiency must pull in opposite directions. Read will not admit this, and he will not fully admit that the machine has frustrated the creative instincts and degraded æsthetic feeling. Indeed, he takes what looks like a perverse pleasure in praising the things that are mechanically and collectively produced as against the achievement of the individual craftsman:

> 'The new æsthetic must be based on the fundamentally new factor in modern civilization—large-scale machine production. That method of production involves certain characteristics which contradict the accepted notion of beauty—they are generally indicated by the word *standardisation*. In itself, standardisation is not an æsthetic question. If a thing is beautiful you do not diminish that beauty by reproducing it. . . . Standardised machine products are exact replicas of one another, and if one is beautiful, the rest are beautiful. . . . We may admit that certain forms of personal expression are not suitable for mechanical reproduction as standardised objects, but we claim that the creative will of the artist can and should be adapted to the new conditions. We draw attention to a certain type of modern art (abstract, non-representational or constructivist art) which, while still remaining a very personal expression of the individual artists who produce it, is nevertheless the prototype of machine art. Such works of art could be reproduced without losing any of their æsthetic qualities.'

At first glance this looks reasonable and the objections likely to be urged against it look sentimental and arty-and-crafty. But just test it by a few concrete examples. 'If a thing is beautiful you do not diminish that beauty by reproducing it.' I suppose that 'Whether on Ida's shady brow' is beautiful. (If you don't care for that particular poem, substitute some other that you do care for.) Well, would you like to hear it read aloud five thousand times running? Would it still be beautiful at the end of such a process? On the contrary, it would seem the most hideous collection of words that has ever existed. Any shape, any sound, any colour, any smell becomes odious through too much repetition, because repetition fatigues the senses to which beauty must make its appeal. Read

often speaks of beauty as though it were a kind of Platonic Absolute existing somewhere or other in its own right and in no way dependent on human appreciation. If one takes this view, one must assume that the value of, say, a picture resides in the picture itself, and that the method by which it has been produced is irrelevant. It may be produced by machinery, or, like certain surrealist pictures, by accident. But how about books? It is just thinkable that books may some day be written by machinery, and it is quite easy to imagine poems being produced partly by fortuitous means—by some device similar to the kaleidoscope, for instance. And if they were 'good' poems I do not see how Read could consistently object to such a process. It is a queer position for an Anarchist to be driven into.

But of course Read is not consistent in his acceptance of the machine. In this book we find him praising the beauties of modern car design, and we find him pointing out that the masses in the industrialized countries have been brought into a state of 'mental sickness' by 'deadening labours and devitalized environment.' We find him writing sympathetically of Paul Klee and Ben Nicholson, but also of Ruskin and Walter de la Mare. We find him saying 'personally, I am against the grandiose in art,' and we find him praising the Pyramids. The fact is, as anyone who has been reviewed by him knows, that Read is too kind a critic. The range of his sympathies, as I pointed out earlier, is very wide, perhaps too wide. The only thing he acutely dislikes is Conservatism, or, to put it more precisely, academicism. He is always on the side of the young against the old. He is in favour of abstract painting and streamlined teapots because the æsthetic Conservatives don't like them: and he is in favour of Anarchism because the political Conservatives, including the official Left, don't like that. The contradiction into which this leads him remains unresolved.

It would be difficult to over-praise Read as a popularizer and as a champion of unfashionable causes. I suppose no one in our time has done more to encourage young poets and keep the British public informed about artistic developments in Europe, and no one of equal standing has had the guts to speak out against the Russomania of the last ten years. But all the same, wide sympathies have their penalty. It is probably a mistake for any kind of artist, even a critic, to endeavour to 'keep up' beyond a certain point. This does not mean that one has to accept the normal academic assumption that literature and art came to an end about forty years ago. Clearly the young and the middle-aged ought to try to appreciate one another. But one ought also to recognize that one's æsthetic

judgment is only fully valid between fairly well-defined dates. Not to admit this is to throw away the advantage that one derives from being born into one's own particular time. Among people now alive there are two very sharp dividing lines. One is between those who can and those who can't remember the period before 1914; the other is between those who were adult before 1933 and those who were not. Other things being equal, who is likelier to have the truer vision at this moment, a person of twenty or a person of fifty? One can't say, though on some points posterity may decide. Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it. This is an illusion, and one should recognize it as such, but one ought also to stick to one's own world-view, even at the price of seeming old-fashioned: for that world-view springs out of experiences that the younger generation has not had, and to abandon it is to kill one's intellectual roots.

If I apply to Read the simple test, 'How much of it sticks?' I find that none of his critical work has left so deep an impression on me as certain passages in his writings about his childhood, and a handful of poems. At this moment I recall particularly a passage describing the making of lead buckshot in a bullet-mould—and the joy of the act, he said, was not in the usefulness of the bullet but in the beauty of the silvery new-minted lead—and a poem written early in this war, 'The Contrary Experience'. In these and similar writings Read is simply speaking out of his experience: he is not trying to be open-minded, or up-to-date, or cosmopolitan, or public-spirited. In politics Read is an Anarchist, in æsthetic theory he is a Europeanizer, but in his origins he is a Yorkshireman—that is, a member of a small, rustic, rather uncouth tribe whose members secretly believe all the other peoples of the earth to be just a little inferior to themselves. I think his best work comes from the Yorkshire strain in him. I am not decrying his critical activities. They have been a civilizing influence which it would be ungrateful not to acknowledge. But in contrast to his autobiographical writings, and to some of his poems and certain passages in his political pamphlets, his purely critical work has a sort of diffuseness, a wateriness, which comes from being too open-minded, too charitable, too civilized, too anxious to keep abreast of modern thought and remain in touch with all movements simultaneously, instead of giving expression to the vehement likes and dislikes which must be present in his mind, just as much as in any other writer's.

GEORGE ORWELL

WALTER DE LA MARE, *The Burning-Glass* (Faber & Faber, 7s. 6d.)

In a note prefacing the poems the author remarks that 'some of them were written many years ago'. We cannot help associating this sentence with more length of time than the ordinary comings and goings of calendar years take. Somehow these sober words make us aware of the monstrous growth in length of each one of the last seven years. So long a time has passed since we left a faraway sunken world that 'seven years' is so small a measure for it that it seems vain to apply it. Walter de la Mare has entered the new era with us. With some wonder we open the first page, curious to see what time and change has done to his kind of poetry and also how much of his aloof perfection the poet has been able to salvage. After reading through the book one may perhaps say that it rose undefeated from the fire because it never meant to win. Such ballads as 'A Portrait', 'Laid Low,' the beautifully moving 'A Dull Boy', are perhaps the only poetry written in this country that can be satisfactorily compared to the ballads of Robert Frost, for instance, or the late Yeats. Particularly such lines as from 'The Outcasts':

> '*Ay, and that madam, sprawling in my sheets,*
> *Vain beyond hell, a pride that knew no ebb,*
> *Mistress, by Satan taught, of all deceits,*
> *Never ceased weaving her mephitic web.*'

Even so, many will find that de la Mare has succeeded better in holding his own in those few short incomparable poems like 'The Field':

> '*Yes, there was once a battle here:*
> *There, where the grass takes on a shade*
> *Of paradisal green, sun-clear—*
> *There the last stand was made.*'

Whoever will wish for a book to be his companion in intimate rare hours of retreat will grow fond of these poems. But when the fury of the final end shakes our limbs and minds we shall need to return to the precise and measured poetry that has emerged in chaos with the aristocratic order of tragic thought.

FRED MARNAU

LAWRENCE DURRELL, *Prospero's Cell* (Faber, 10s. 6d).

Before the war, Mr. Durrell and his wife lived in Corfu, the Greek Corcyra, an Ionian island off the coast of Albania. *Prospero's Cell*, although it claims to be 'a guide to the landscape and manners of the island of Corcyra', is in fact no more than a record of that sojourn, and a nostalgic account of Mr. Durrell's Golden Age. To this the landscape and manners take second place. The book resembles one of those documentary films in which the camera-man has done his job a trifle too well, and run away with the directing. Certainly one is apt to remember it as a series of shots—night-fishing, a visit to a puppet-theatre, wine-pressing—each complete and excellent in itself, yet somehow unrelated, though the same characters, the Count D., Theodore the professor, and Zarian the poet, who appear every now and then as vehicles for intellectual conversation, are constantly turning up. Sporadic bits of information serve to garnish; facts, legends, conjectures. Did Shakespeare visit Corcyra in 1609? The Count thinks so. He quotes 'The Tempest' to indicate that the scenery of Corfu and that of Prospero's island is identical. This whimsy furnishes the title. For the mythologist the island has some interest: it possesses a cave in which Jason married Medea on the way home with the Golden Fleece, and there is a bay where Ulysses escaping from Calypso was washed up by the sea, and where he met Nausicaa. Mr. Durrell devotes much less space to these classic grounds than one would expect; but he has got quite a lot to say about St. Spiridion, the island saint, in a patronizing tone that is rather reminiscent of Dr. Axel Munthe's nearly-forgotten masterpiece. (These Mediterranean saints! Norman Douglas and Aldous Huxley have described them to death.) For the rest there is a very sketchy account of the island's history, and one or two notes concerning the relics of British culture (Corfu belonged to England for the first half of the nineteenth century)

Prospero's Cell is of the same genus as 'The Unquiet Grave.' The two books share a similar style, and a not unlike attitude of mind. A Mediterranean dazzle informs the style of each author, making the word-pictures clear-cut, distinct, and lacking in the rainy softness which distinguishes most of our native prose. With Mr. Durrell, there has been too much searching for the right word, and not enough for the right rhythm. This is a criticism I should be inclined to make of Mr. Durrell's poetry also; a remark which leads me to the point that *Prospero's Cell* is in every sense a book complementary to the collection of poems Mr. Durrell published a few years ago. If you have read one, it is necessary to read the other.

DAVID WRIGHT

LITERATURE AND LONELINESS

ELISABETH SMART, *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* (Editions PL, 6s.); BRYAN MERRYMAN, translated by Frank O'Connor, *The Midnight Court* (Maurice Fridberg, 6s.).

To be allowed to enjoy the sensitive mind of an intelligent woman is surely a rarer privilege than to be permitted to hold the hand of a pretty one. I am fully aware of a tendency to exaggerate the Cinderella theory—after all, Mr. Eliot's desk is not exactly littered with rejection slips. However, when confronted by a thing of beauty, not protected by an established reputation, most book reviewers get rid of some of their own meanness by hurling it at the author and calling it criticism. While Miss Smart was sitting on her suit-case in Grand Central Station and weeping, Mr. Daniel George crept up behind and stuck a nasty label on her luggage—may I therefore be allowed to wait until she has finished and then offer to carry her suit-case, not into the lobby of the adjacent hotel, but up out on to the Parnassian slopes of the far away grass, for that, despite her tears or perhaps because of them is where she already belongs.

By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept is not only a first novel, but is also the beginning of a new literature, for Miss Smart is a Canadian, and no Canadian has ever written like this before. Listen to the way she speaks of that country:

'Coming from California, which is oblivious of regret, approaching November whips me with the passion of the dying year. And after the greed already hardening part of the American face into stone, I fancy I see kindness and gentleness looking out at me from train windows. Surely the porter carrying my bags has extracted a spiritual lesson from his hardship. Surely this acceptance of a mediocre rôle gives human dignity. And over the fading wooden houses I sense the reminiscences of the pioneer passion, and the determination of early statesmen who were mild but individual, and able to allude to Shakespeare while discussing politics under the elms. No great neon face has been superimposed over their minor but memorable history. Nor has the blood of the early settlers, spilt in feud and heroism, yet been bottled by a Coco-Cola firm and sold as 10 cent tradition.'

A prominent contemporary European writer once referred to Canada as a whore from whom men soon returned to their own women, but it seems now that there was also a nursery in the brothel. This book, together with the writing published in a magazine called 'First Statement', mean quite simply and say in a plain,

unshowy manner, that this is the beginnings of a new Literature being made by Canadians.

This whole question of whether these ex-Colonial nations will produce a native culture is of great concern and is a subject of wild speculation. England has done to Canada culturally just what Britain has done to India physically—it has brow-beaten it for centuries. Now just because an original Canadian literature begins in the twentieth century, it is, I believe, going to be produced by the oppressed, and in Canada the oppressed consist chiefly of the working class, racial minorities and women.

This is where the generality, of a new literature, is affected by this particular novel of Miss Smart's. Her work is accused, by certain drug-store critics, of bearing a marked resemblance to writing in 'Peg's Paper'. Frank Lloyd Wright and the architect of the Corner House hold certain things in common—they both used drawing paper, compasses, set squares and cement. The book does, it is true, trail off considerably towards the end, but the most watery of milk puddings can't spoil a good meal.

When a woman's hair is ruffled by a lover's hand it is the ideas rushing through her head rather than the blood hurrying along her veins that has that kind of attraction which appeals not to one's arms but to one's imagination. This is the kind of relationship with a woman that one doesn't get out of one's mind simply by getting the girl into bed. Miss Smart's ability to write, her power to use language in a manner native to her original feelings, is as established as Helen of Troy's ability to upset the mateyness of a Subalterns' Mess.

Miss Smart is a symbol of the young of my generation and of my country as surely as Joan of Arc was of those of hers. Our enemy was, not the English, but the filthy smugness of the Rotary mind, our execution, not by burning faggots, but by the fumes of the smoking-room joke. And the voices we also heard, came, like those heard by the mediæval French girl, not from heaven, but from inside our own souls. But our tragedy was that in running away from the Philistines of Shaunessy Heights and Rosedale, we ran into the mediocrities of Bloomsbury and the Rue des Beaux Arts. We should have run away not from a suburb, but from a century. We knew what to say to our parents. We told them, perhaps with regrets, to go to hell, but what directions and what excuses are we to offer, not to our fathers, but to our sons. No review of this book could omit a mention of the excellent dust-cover by Mr. Gerald Wilde. If hardly any book out of Canada has been so well written, no book published in England for a long time has had such a good dust-cover.

Another lonely poet, Bryan Merryman, who wrote 'The Midnight Court', lived in eighteenth century Limerick, and wrote in Gaelic. Mr. Frank O'Connor has given us a translation, which if it is worthy of the original, means that the original was very fine poetry indeed. Mr. O'Connor, however, in his introduction, seems, in reacting against the boorishness of contemporary lower middle class government in Ireland, to go too far in the other direction. One can't really agree that there is much to be proud of in having, as he says of Merryman, that sort of clear, objective intelligence which rarely attaches itself to lost causes. It is Mr. O'Connor and not Bryan Merryman who holds such objective intelligence in so high esteem. Whereas I know at least one scholar that, when he wanted to know the meaning of objective, thumbed his way towards the C's in his dictionary and looked up the word 'Cowardice'. This book published in Dublin, is beautifully produced.

PAUL POTTS

THE MAGPIE'S NEST AND THE EYRIE

Poems by OSCAR WILLIAMS, *That's all that Matters* (Creative Age Press, N.Y.); KENNETH REXROTH, *In What Hour* (Macmillan).

I have had two American books in the last few weeks—this by Williams, and Kenneth Rexroth's *In What Hour*. I mention the second of these because it puts the first into perspective. Williams is one of the poets who penetrates everywhere, a sort of literary potato-plant, acclimatized in any locality. Rexroth can be judged in part by the names of the magazines in which he appears. A poet tends to be either a part of his time or a critic of it. Williams is the first. He has all the technical proficiency and personal emptiness of a wholly barbarian social order. He is a part of that order, and he reflects it most uncritically when he is consciously satirizing it. He is a windbag because barbarism is verbose, he uses charlatan's tricks because he is a part of the same social confidence trick which he denounces at times—he is personal and takes you by the ear because barbarism, like the ogre, is activated by a Calibanic desire to be loved. Because his poetry has all the vices of its time it succeeds best when it displays the virtues that go with them—agility, flamboyance, and angularity. Williams' showmanship makes him incapable of writing a merely dull poem, and he is too intelligent to descend to bandwaggoning and Odes to Duty. The originality of his phrases is impressive in single poems—it is only in the face of a whole book that one sees the mechanical character of the process. I cannot read any collection without a mind-picture—of Patchen as

a blind giant with the heart of a child, of Rexroth as he describes himself, sitting on a mountain and thinking about Vanzetti; of Williams as a poetic commercial traveller, trained in salesmanship, desperately anxious to please, mechanically efficient and in a vast hurry, bringing forth from his treasure things new and old, among which here and there is an article of value—'The Wolf of Music,' which I can remember after years, or odd lines:

> *'I think of the cow's tail, how all summer long*
> *It beat the shape of harps into the air.'*

There are Tin Pan Alley tunes which have something of the genius of folk music, and there are poems like these which have a claim to be recollected, but minor poetry is the poetry of clay, formed entirely against the poet's real will and ambition by an environment he does not comprehend and cannot control. Rexroth's work is the poetry of granite—he differs from Williams in being master of it, as his technique is a solo violin to Williams' Wurlitzer. He is a scholar who is human and a poet who is scholarly, and he shares with Patchen, Cummings and Henry Miller the occasional blasting flash of contempt which makes the genuine enemy of barbarism and Monkeyville. To Patchen's inspired delirium he opposed a clarity so cold that when he is contemplating real things he freezes all, even the living, into a glacial immobility,

> *'Then quietly at first and then rich and fullbodied*
> *I hear the voice of a young woman singing*
> *The emigrants on the corner are holding*
> *A wake for their oldest child, a driverless truck*
> *Broke away on the steep hill and killed him,*
> *Voice after voice adds itself to the singing.*
> *Orion moves westward across the meridian,*
> *Rigel, Bellatrix, Betelgeuse, marching in order,*
> *The great nebula glimmering in his loins.'*

When the voice ceases you can hear an echo. But against this clarity there are erotic poems, deeply sensual and suggesting the type of wholeness on the edges of which Lawrence prowled and longed—the work of a whole man. It is amazing, in a society of citizens, how tall a whole man looks.

ALEX COMFORT

SEÁN JENNETT, *The Cloth of Flesh* (Faber & Faber, 6s.); ed. DENYS VAL BAKER, *Little Reviews Anthology* 1945 (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 8s. 6d.); PETER NOBLE, *The City in the Sun* (Pendulum Publications, 1s.); PAUL ENGLE, *American Child* (Random House, $2.00); HERBERT PALMER, *The Dragon of Tingalam* (Editions PL, 6s.).

The essential simplicity of death and war is the main theme of Mr. Jennett's second volume of poems. The blurb calls his attitude, with regard to war, a 'brooding on its effect on the body and the soul and revolt against its necessity'—the danger of this attitude being, not the irrelevant one of the 'public' having grown tired of war poetry, but that it is apt to lead him to some rather loose, prosy theorizing:

> '*I am the enemy. I am the instrument*
> *of my country, used to being used.*
> *In the ordinary way I am afraid of death,*
> *afraid to kill, afraid of being killed:*
> *but this is war. My country is at stake:*
> *its manner of life, which is my manner,*
> *its language, which is the tongue I speak,*
> *its customs, which are my customs,*
> *and its people, which is myself.*'

That is all very grand and platitudinous, and it has been so throughout these years, when everybody—the M.o.I., the Press, our uniformed selves—have been saying it; but it seems a waste of Mr. Jennett's brooding if passages like this one are to be its outcome, passages in which he does not believe nor particularly desires us to believe.

In fairness, it must be said that the above stanza is taken from what is perhaps the only complete failure in the book: the 'Cycle' of seven parts, a surprisingly haphazard, half-hearted, weepy affair for a poet of Mr. Jennett's calibre to write.

Which brings me to the reasons why this book, good as parts of it are, must be a disappointment to anyone who has taken an interest in this poet's work as it appeared in 'Always Adam' and various Little Reviews.

Firstly, and this may be said of other young poets as well—Alan Rook and the late Sidney Keyes, for instance—there is what appears to be an obsession caused by a misunderstanding of the technique of the Quartets, namely, that a poet in order to be considered important, must write cold, barren philosophical exercises, using a bone-dry vocabulary, plenty of capitals (Despair, Fear, War), all-

embracing symbols which are meant to evoke immediate reactions but have been done to death ('raper of cloistered nuns and girls/fresh from school' (!), and, especially with war poetry, words like bombs, bombers, smoking gun); and a too-liberal employment of poetical devices, such as numerous and various incantations.

The second reason—and, again, this does not by any means apply to Mr. Jennett alone—is the haste with which the book seems to have been written. Seeing potentially good poems marred by facile generalizations ('The Quick'), by being over-burdened with alliterations and assonances ('Morning'), by balladesque refrains giving an unwarrantedly melodramatic effect ('My Son, My Son' and 'And the Dead':

'O who will shoot the ranting man
O who destroy the evil glory
and throw the smoking gun away:
though he shall be betrayed and sold for gold
yet he shall live in this or any story')

—one is left with the impression that the poet, in his rush to complete the book, had not taken the time to prune and select his poems with sufficient care, to exclude the merely technical, superficial exercises and the many flat passages which prevent it from being properly balanced.

There is, however, much to be praised in Mr. Jennett's work. The eight lines of 'Merchandise' make up what is probably the most successful poem in the book: without a single false note or obtrusive attempt at moralizing, without any groping for universal symbols, it is a moving and finished piece of writing; and in 'Old Joyce', 'The Grey Washer by the Ford,' 'I.H.S.' and 'Mahoney' there are other examples to prove that his work is most satisfying when it is least presumptuous and general.

. . . .

In the second annual collection of writings representative of the Little Reviews in this country, the standard is so high that one is almost persuaded that more than a handful of the magazines from which the contributions have been selected is worth taking seriously.

The many literary periodicals listed by Mr. Baker may be roughly divided into three groups: those containing matter of the highest available literary quality; those in which a political or literary axe is ground; those whose editors want to edit a Review—probably because of the expectation of a large bubble resulting from it. (As was pointed out in a recent issue of POETRY QUARTERLY, it takes very little money to start such a Review, and there is no entrance

examination for editors.) The last-named category, though it exists, is hardly worth discussing: the reviews in it appear and disappear. The second category is much more important, if only from an historical viewpoint, for it is a reflection of the ever-increasing group-consciousness which Mr. Orwell has so clearly tabulated in his 'Notes on Nationalism' in the first issue of 'Polemic'. Perhaps more than a reflection; since the reason for their existence is to foster whatever heat or hatred their editors would like us to feel for or against certain causes, these Reviews put a literary halo on cranks, act as sales-managers for panaceas.

It is to Mr. Baker's credit that he has not allowed the quantitative preponderance of such magazines to lower the standards of his anthology: his aim has been to include the good rather than the typical. This was bound to cause certain incongruities. Thus a poem by Maurice Lindsay can hardly be said to be representative of the verse normally published in 'Poetry Review'; the poems from 'Poetry (London)' are not indicative of the contents of its one issue to have appeared during the past year; and three poems, however good, seem rather a large number to include from 'Horizon', wherein poetry has for quite some time now been very much in the background.

One could have wished for a more critical appraisal of the Reviews. Apart from one small footnote, though—in which he says only that he does not mean to imply 'that all little reviews are unique and beyond criticism. . . . What matters is that (the reader) should have the reviews to choose from'—there is really nothing in Mr. Baker's introduction to point to any differences in the quality of editing and contents between, say, 'Our Time' and 'Cornhill', 'Seven' and 'Scrutiny' (the last-named, surely important, is not even represented in the text). If Mr. Baker feels that his province is merely to collect, not to pronounce judgment, an alternative way of indicating the different standards might have been to include criticisms of one book as they appeared in various Reviews.

These may be small matters, but they seem worth raising, for this anthology, a great improvement on last year's issue, is useful if for no other reason than that it provides a more lasting frame for some good stories and poems and several valuable essays—in particular, Dr. Bowra's on 'Futurism and Poetry'.

. . . .

Mr. Noble's verses oscillate between clichés screaming at the reacher and clichés lecturing down to him from a great height *Refractory perplexities of my subconscious troubled me*, he says: one believes him; and he describes his 'Politician' thus:

Dagger-drawn fantasies growing on green branches,
Feather-light platitudes spring from false mouth.
Utopian gibberish expressed in deep fancy,
Conjectural sympathy and visionary powers'

—which one may consider a fair summing-up of this booklet, although, especially after reading his 'Three Poems for Greece', one may have doubts about that 'visionary powers' bit.

. . . .

The trouble with books about children is that they are liable to be childish. Mr. Engle's book, once the ghastly dust-cover has been thrown away, is a handsome piece of book-production; once the prologue and epilogue sonnets, included to justify the title, have been overlooked, it is surprisingly level-headed when one considers that it consists of sixty-odd sonnets all dealing with one child 'asking for direction'. It would have been so easy for Mr. Engle to be caught in the trap of being sentimental, obvious, mushy with the air of an amazed and delighted discoverer, and quite frequently, of course, he out-Christopher-Robins Mr. Milne, but his style has a sufficiency of neat detachment for the book to be readable if taken in small doses.

. . . .

As I said, the trouble with books about and for children is that they are liable to be childish. Mr. Palmer's play is infantile. We are told that it was written fifteen years ago, but never published until now, when 'it seems to suit better the spirit of the times'. I am not sure, of course, but in view of Atom Bombs, Trials of War Criminals, difficult international relations, that strikes me as a very subversive statement to make.

ERNST SIGLER

KARL SHAPIRO, *V-Letter and Other Poems* (Secker & Warburg, 6s. net); PETER YATES, *The Assassin* (Chatto & Windus, 6s. net).

Those of us who were fortunate enough to read the Spring number of last year's POETRY QUARTERLY will have learnt that Mr. Shapiro was Mark van Doren's 'blue-eyed boy', Secker and Warburg's new transatlantic find, and that even Allen Tate (who doesn't very much like the young) had a good word and a vote for him. Reading on they will also have learnt that Nicholas Moore wasn't impressed and called the 'blue-eyed boy's' big bluff.

All this history makes it difficult. The American verse-counter is new ground to me, whereas Nick Moore knows the lay-out as he knows the top of his dining-room table. On the other hand, who am I to pick a quarrel with Messrs. Tate and van Doren concerning their own home products? Fairness demands this recapitulation.

To begin with, then, it is quite clear that Karl Shapiro is a born writer. Words, epithets, and images come to him as readily as wind to a baby or hiccups to a drunk. Between the behaviour of a born writer and a ripely developed poet some distinctions may be made, though. The first is one who lives in words; plays, coquettes, and conjures with them. We remember the parody of this type drawn by Tchekov: the man who could never see a cloud in the sky without comparing it to a grand-piano, a sofa, a sideboard, or something or other. His is the mind which reacts with a too great immediacy to phenomena; an immediacy sometimes of the superficial. Such a one can never view an object without straightaway sticking on it the ticket of a word. Contrasting with this, we have the poet who absorbs the things his senses gather, masticates them mentally, mixes them with feeling, and returns them to the world in a speech which is more than words.

Mr. Shapiro, in this second book of his to be published in England, present us with by-products of both these behaviours. His poem 'Fireworks' is packed full of images of visual virtuosity; verse most effective for display purposes but, like his subjects, without the value of duration:

> '*How the hairy tarantulas crawl in the soft of the ether*
> *Where showers of lilies explode in the jungle of creepers;*
> *How the rockets of sperm hurtle up to the moon and beneath her*
> *Deploy for the eggs of the astral and sorrowful sleepers?*'

The surer wedlock between words and things, of which the poet is certainly capable, is instanced by an image from his poem 'Red Indian':

> '*Their children glow like some primordial fruit*
> *Cut from the branch by knives.*'

At least we must give Mr. Shapiro credit for diagnosing his own trouble and eschewing the quack antidote:

> '*We are too rich with books, our blood*
> *Is heavy with over-thoughtful food,*
> *Our minds are gravid—and yet to try*
> *To backtrack to simplicity*
> *Is fatal.*'

We must hope to find, in creative patience, the true balance between the rights of words and the rights of things which real poetry possesses.

Peter Yates, who shows, according to Mr. Spender, 'a remarkable power of seeing abstract ideas in terms of flesh and blood,' has here written a poetic drama on the theme of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln by John Wilkes Booth, a Confederate conspirator, on the eve of the South's total surrender.

Whether *The Assassin* would play well on the stage is perhaps a matter of conjecture. Theatres cannot always accommodate their 'props' to the burning of troop-surrounded barns. (One remembers with an æsthetic shudder Shakespearian battle-scenes on small provincial stages.) Yet this is a purely technical hitch. As broadcast *The Assassin* would be admirable.

The main point about the play is that it appears as essentially dramatic; dramatic in conception of the principal character, dramatic in action and suspense. And this is where the playwright as poet comes in. As one of the speakers in Mr. Eliot's 'Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry' says, 'the dramatist who is not a poet is so much the less of a dramatist'. In *The Assassin* the poetry is not in the garlands of rhodomontade with which each scene is formally crowned. The poetry is in the meaning; for it is obvious that Mr. Yates has thought much about the tragic as an element in life as well as a form of dramatic art. This is not to say that we do not get the choice and concise intuitive flash of phrase: death as 'the black material of ageless memory', the ideal as a force which leads us to 'unlimber guns to find the range of human paradise', and those minds obsessed with power as 'the black knights imprisoned in mythology'.

The author introduces a chorus into his play to interpret the larger issues of the action. It may be objected that this chorus speaks rather like a group of poetic critics of drama primed with Aristotle's 'Poetics' and Nietzsche's 'Birth of Tragedy' in their talk of the Pure Idea, elemental Forms, and the living Act. On the other hand, Hegel has written that the poet may write over the heads of the audience even when he profoundly interests them. 'He may captivate the common heart yet have a reserve of meaning only to be reached by study.'

DEREK STANFORD

VERNON WATKINS, *The Lamp and the Veil* (Faber, 6s.); W. S. GRAHAM, *2nd Poems* (Editions Poetry London, 5s.).

Certain qualities in Mr. Watkins' first book revealed at once his strengths and weaknesses as a poet; the craft with which he shaped his poems showed him to be the greatest master of form in poetry at the present time; it also showed that this carefulness of craft could stunt his development. It made me feel that if Mr. Watkins could wear more of his heart on his sleeve and lose none of his delicate and restrained manner of statement he would undoubtedly be the poet, at least, of the forties. His second volume is disappointing. He has obviously realized the danger of too much care and has tried to remedy it.

He presents us with three long poems: first, an account of his visit to Yeats in Dublin; second, 'Sea Music for My Sister Travelling'; and third, 'The Broken Sea,' a poem for his god-child born in Paris in 1940. They show that Mr. Watkins, for the most part, has ventured beyond his present powers. In the first his craft has been set aside in an attempt to catch the spontaneity of Yeats in conversation. (Ordinary conversation is hard to catch, and Wordsworth fell down, too.) Sometimes it comes off in passages like:

> '*What if the labour all seem vain,*
> *What if years are spent*
> *Chiselling and chiselling*
> *The stubborn element?*
> *All is rewarded on a breath*
> *By an accident*';

but often, more often, is becomes forced:

> '*There must always be a quality*
> *Of nonchalance in the work.*
> *The intellect is impotent*
> *Labouring in the dark,*
> *For a poem is always*
> *A piece of luck.*'

In the second poem Mr. Watkins has loosened his earlier rhythms to good effect, and here he is best. His choice of words is something which could only be set out in another poem. He has taken the old sea images and reset them, so that they come up with the freshness of a wave. The poem creates some *n*-th dimension of its own, which will mark Mr. Watkins as a non-derivative poet in an age of muddlers. I am not retracting my previous remarks, for there are

faults here, too; but the blessings of it are such as demand recognition.

The third poem is another matter, and I have no use for it. The theme, whatever it be, is unsustained. We have a tender line addressed to the young child; and in attempt to show the violence of the times we have another line which can convey nothing. What chances are there when Mr. Watkins asks us to read first that the child was

'Gathered through darkness on a kiss',

and then says that it was

. . . born when Manselton was buried'

This is a Swansea image, a suburb of Swansea image. Together with references to Cwmdonkin Park, Inkerman Street, Townhill and St. Mary's clock burned out in the blitz, it just doesn't come off. No one apart from the very few people who read modern poetry in Swansea can get the point. Mr. Watkins is safer with the classics and with his refinement. He must feel longer and think less over his work: and return to his careful craft, loosening it a little with emotion.

Where Mr. Watkins touches the lightning with his finger, Mr. Graham clutches at the thunder with his fist. I feel the same about Mr. Graham as I did when I reviewed his first volume a couple of years back. His power of language is immense, his range of words unbounded. But he does not use either to the best possible effect. As it is, the activity of his words is muffled by the way in which one meaning is piled up on the next. No single word is allowed full play. No image is allowed to work itself out. Therefore his poetic logic suffers badly. It exists, certainly; but only in his music. And words as poetic agents must be meaningful as well as musical. That Mr. Graham will see this is fairly sure. In one poem in the present volume he climbs up over his 'house of bricks' (to use the phraseology of the blurb) and cries:

'Many without elegy interpret a famous heart
Hold with a searoped saviour to direct
The land. The morning moves aside
Sucking disaster and my bread
On the hooped fields of Eden's mountain
Over the crews of wrecked seagrain.'

Here he is getting somewhere; he wants to apply this method of writing wholesale to poems where it is beginning to be present. 'By Law of Exile,' for instance, where the impulse which moved him is sometimes turned to

'Ganged into stone and fierce foot still
Against place and den of dug creatures',

and sometimes to the effective

'. . . the fall to shelter
Fell to beginning gardens beyond blown call'.

Mr. Graham is a man of terrific energy; sometimes he is mastered by it. But he shows that he is beginning to direct words; we must wait to see what happens.

JOHN ORMOND THOMAS

HENRY MOORE, *Shelter Sketch-book* (Nicholson & Watson, Editions Poetry London, 15s.).

Interest in the work of Henry Moore is steadily increasing—witness the recent Zwemmer publication of his sculptures, the excellent reproductions (and the illuminating preface of Mr. Grigson) in 'The Penguin Modern Painters' series; and now this volume, the day-book, as it were, of his chief work as a war artist: the sketching of shelter life in England during the air-raids. This collection has two distinct claims on our attention: its technical and philosophical implications, which we shall discuss more fully; and its pictorial representation of a phase of human hardship and distress in our time, the sudden unexpected camaraderie of men and women in peril, and the dumb pathos which these pictures, not individually but accumulatively, convey of the common man himself as

'Some infinitely gentle
Infinitely suffering thing.'

These sketches have, too, the great value of showing us not only a few finished products but of consisting, for the most part, in evidence of how this highly original artist works; these are the first drafts from which the drawings that attracted so much attention at the National Gallery and in America were made. Yet that these drawings and sketches meet with opposition, resistance, and misunderstanding in certain quarters it would be idle to deny. For Mr. Moore is primarily a sculptor, and one with a very definite and particular conception of his art. This fact is generally appreciated, but its implication in a consideration of his drawings is much less widely understood.

Whether as sculptor or artist Mr. Moore's outstanding characteristic is, perhaps, his interest in the primitive and the embryonic; less in things as they *are* than in what they came from; and he shares with the Functionalist architect a belief that these origins should be apparent in the finished product. Like the primitives, he is concerned with revealing his conception of the soul or essence of people and things and very little with naturalistic reproduction. That is why he was early attracted by the Mexican and Negro carvings introduced to him through the writings of Roger Fry; by the monumental, almost brute strength of the Masacchio frescoes he himself studied in Florence; and by the ethnological and sculptural collections in the British Museum. In his neglect of the final form of things, of mere visual reproduction, he is often, in fact, perhaps too careless. Those strange revelations of embryonic life in his statuary are, for example, sometimes so far removed from our habitual associations that, although the essential spirit is caught, it is immured in what is to us a dead form; not a form lacking originality of conception, but dead because too alien to evoke our necessary emotional response. That is true also, in a measure, of some of these sketches, e.g., the fifth and thirty-eighth (it is a pity that the 82 plates are not numbered for reference); but the criticism is of their sculptural, never of their graphic or pictorial qualities.

It is not surprising to learn that Moore was a careful student not only of the B.M. statuary, but of the Natural History Museum. Life in all its manifestations of growth and development, the 'ugly' equally with the 'beautiful', both shorn of all Romantic aura, is what attracts him—the cell, the skeleton, and the pre-historic rock formation. One of the implications of his work, reiterated again and again, is that all visual forms are manifold expressions of that single Life permeating the universe: the rock or tree tends to become humanized, the man or woman to grope back towards inchoate matter, the organic to sink into the inorganic. This pantheistic view of Moore's of man

> '*Wrapped round in earth's diurnal course*
> *With rocks, and stones, and trees*',

may be apprehended in many of the sketches in this book, of which the second may serve as an example.

If Moore's interest is pre-eminently in essential form and organic growth it is, however, by no means exclusively so. There is subtle use of colour to reinforce the 'meaning' of many of the drawings; 'Falling Buildings' (No. 7) is a good piece of realism; and in the second half of the book the naturalistic portrayal of children and

of the heads of sleepers is both sympathetic and impressive. But primarily this is a world of symbols: many of the sketches might well be of lost souls groping in Dante's *Inferno*, and the whole is suffused with a deep sense of human tragedy and with the spirit of futility and satiric anger edged with pity that broods over the world of Goya, Picasso, Poe, or Baudelaire.

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